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GRAPHEX 3, Contents:

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A Double Interview With Doug Moench and Don McGregor Part 1 4

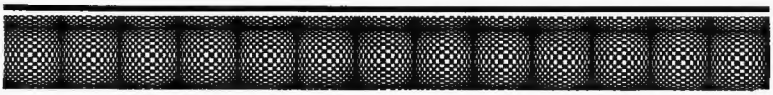
STARSMITH JONES, by D Mowry & G Day 11

KELVIN'S WORLD, by B Mutschler 19

INTO ANOTHER UNIVERSE, by R McCollum 27

THE WINNER, by L Sprague de Camp 37

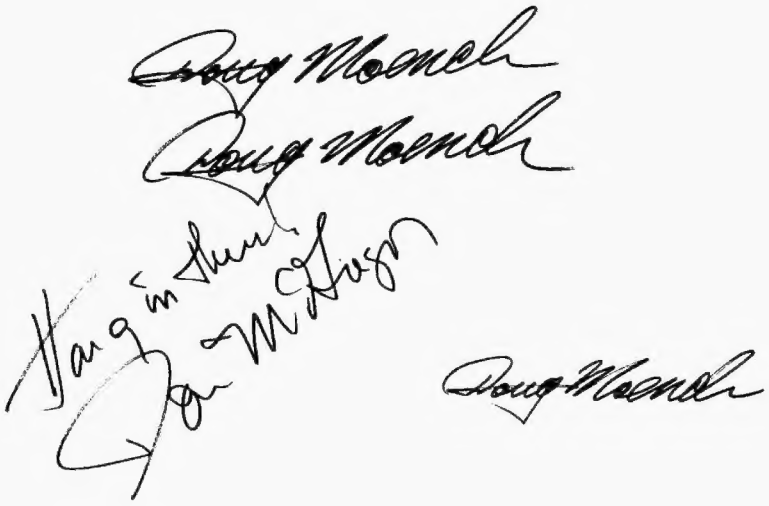
Interview Pt 1, continued 38



Thanks (as usual) go to all contributers, the Radnor Township School District, Mr. Ed Hine, and Brad Dorfman. GRAPHEX is published tri-anually by Bill Mutschler, 500 Crestview Rd., Wayne, PA, 19087. WSA #783. GRAPHEX 3 is a contingency issue of sorts, acting as a last minute replacement of a planned 96 page triple issue. This fall, GRAPHEX 4 will feature the second half of the Moench-McGregor interview, two dynamite graphic stories featuring the combined talents of Tim Herzog, Pete Iro, and myself as well as a few more surprises.

In case you didn't know (ahem!), GRAPHEX 2, 48 pages of interviews and art featuring deCamp, Steranko, Gulacy, Andru and a host of fan talent is still available for 80¢. ENTROPY COSMIX 1, 24 pages of cosmic fiction and art by Bill Morse, Rick McCollum, Dan Adkins, Ann Lachman and myself is still awaiting your measly 40¢, or $1.10 for both GX 2 and EC 1.

See you next fall, and write! The new letterspage was pushed out of this issue, so you still have a chance for some free copies in exchange for any printed comments. Dealers: I still offer good discounts for quantity orders, so send your money, today!!



Doug: Here's something for you to look at.

Bill: Mayerik's pencils here surprise me. (I'm looking over the unfinished artwork for an issue of Ka-zar.) He always seems to try to interpret his pencil too much when inking.

Doug: I know, he defeats his own purpose sometimes by putting in a lot of pencil shading which you can't ink. And one recent issue, the printing plates were smudged and the art came out unclear. You can't blame that on him.

Bill: Steranko said that he wanted to get out of comics.

Doug: Get out? He is! Finally now he's reentering it with this Chandler thing.

Bill: No, I meant Mayerik- he wanted to get out of comics and get into stunt acting.

Doug: No, that's not true. I read your interview (with Steranko in issue two- ed. note.) I just talked to Val and mentioned that. He said,"Gee, I don't know where Steranko got that idea."

Val would like to get into acting, and he thinks that Steranko brought up stuntman as an example of a good way to break into the acting business. There was a misinterpretation somewhere. If Val ever does get out of comics, it'll more likely be into a different phase of art; paintings or portrait stuff. He'd like to be an actor, but then I'd like to be king of the Earth too.

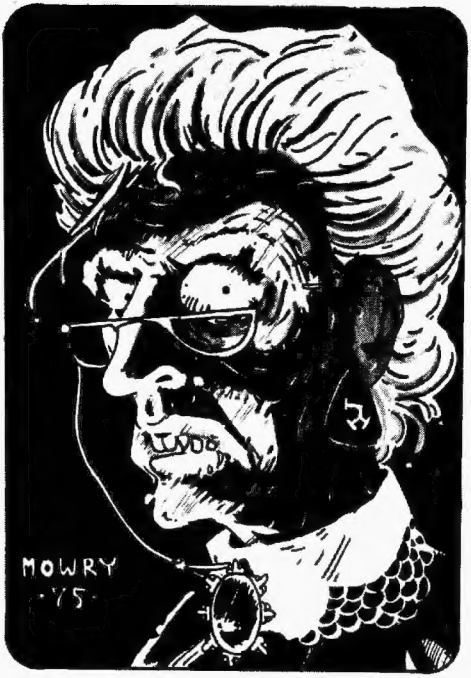
Bill: Do either of you want to go into novel writing and get out of comics?

Doug: I've written two novels already and I'd like to get back into it. 'First one was sword and sorcery- it seems like that's everybody's first novel. The second one is kind of juvenile I suppose. It's self-indulgent, surrealistic, fantasy-science-fiction, trippy sort of stuff I guess.

Neither one of them is published. The first was sold but never published because after I got my money the publisher went bankrupt. ....Powell Publications in California, they're defunct now, out of business. They said I could buy it back if I wanted. Now on to yours...

Don: My novels? I wrote one when I was fifteen, but it's unreadable.

Doug: You can't count those.



Don: I was in the midst of doing a novel when I got sidetracked into comics. It wasn't sword and sorcery, it was very contemporary. It was written about '68, '69, and is essentially about a guy 18 or 19 years old. His father's pretty old and he decides to make more out of his life. He has a little conflict with society as individuals tend to do these days.

Bill: Don, do you do anything else besides comic writing? Doug seems to do everything under the sun, but you don't seem to write that much.

Don: Not recently. Well, I'm not anything because I'm not writing for Marvel anymore. That you can put down, it only came about as of yesterday.

Doug: Bulletin!

Don: We may get into that and we may not. (Laughs.) 'Depends on how the interview goes.

Bill: Well, if you have any doubts, just tell me if you don't want something printed. This issue won't be printed for a while either. (This interview was held on April 7, 1976- ed. note.)

Don: No, that's alright, I don't care if it comes out tomorrow! (Laughs.) I'm just not sure, I'm still.....

Bill: There were rumors concerning violence and the Ku Klux Klan- you having to cut the series short.

Don: Yes, that's true.

Doug: But it's not true about the violence.

Don: Right, that was not true. But, there was a little bit of flack over the fact that we had the Panther burning on the cross. The only comment I can make on that is that I wish it was just a writer's fabrication. Unfortunately, people in real life are doing that or have done it in the past, and I'm certain it won't be the last time. What they objected to was the fact that we made it real, that the character experienced pain. Another comic book around the same time had a naked woman hanging upsidedown on a cross being bathed in hot oil, but <u>she</u> enjoyed it, so it was OK.

Bill: Where was that?

Don: I dare not mention any titles.

Doug: Heh, is this on? (Points to the recorder- ed. note.)

Bill: Sure.

Doug: I'd better shape up here. I was wondering why he was phrasing everything so eloquently, more so than usual.

Don: I'm always eloquent! ...I think the thing that they objected to is that the character really felt pain from the incident. It seems that something's sick there if it's alright for people to feel pleasure being burned on a cross or whatever, as opposed to somebody being destroyed by it. I just think there's something there that somebody ought to think about.

And yes, there was a little bit of trouble about the Klan stuff; they didn't want to do it from the beginning. My feeling at the time had been- at the conclusion of "Panther's Rage" which had run over two years- I had done just about every jungle schtik that I could possibly think up or had wanted to do. I had wanted to see if we could transfer locals, change almost the entire cast of characters- retaining only the Panther and Monica- and see if we couldn't keep the readership we had. 'Do something completely different so that the series wouldn't stagnate.

I kind of got turned on to doing the Klan stories. Not per se because of the Klan because we also intended to bring a Rev. Sun Yung Moon type group into the picture. What I wanted to do during the year of the bicentennial was to do a cross section of America. We would

have moved out of Georgia and gone up East. That won't happen now because the series has to end. I'm not even sure they're going to let me do the last book now as things stand.

There was a lot of flack due to it, then sales dropped on the book and that didn't validate it too much. So, I suppose I made a wrong decision, but I think that it was an interesting thing to do. And I think that for once we were trying to do something that was valid and probably worth doing. Perhaps we both could have handled it better. Billy at the time was starting to lose interest in comics, I had gone through some very personal hassles- the breakup of my family right at the time when I was going to do a series that'll encompass a year or two's worth of books. I didn't tell them at the time, (laughs) they would have handed me my head even sooner. You really have to have it pretty well structured before hand. And while I had much of it structured, I didn't have each book individually structured as I had in "Panther's Rage". I knew at the beginning of "Panther's Rage"- ten out of the thirteen books- what precisely they were going to be. What the minor themes were going to be, and what the major theme I was trying to get at with the series as a whole.

Bill: Did you have any long range plans for Power Man?

Don: Yes, I had a lot of long range plans for it.

Bill: How did you come to get that book? To me, that didn't seem like your type of series.

Don: It was to me. It was the only book at Marvel that I longed to do outside the books that I was doing. Basically, I think that Cage is a very contemporary strip and you don't have to reach out to grab themes to hold on to, things that relate to what's happening to us as a culture today. Cage is so immediate and on the streets. I find that it's a book stimulating to do, and also you could have the visual graphics of the superhero genre.

I had a lot of plans for it, but none of it could really coalesce because every time I'd start to do the strip.... I'd gone into two books of the series and then they said that I wasn't going to do the strip because someone else was going to take over. So, I said that we're going to do a fill-in issue for Frank Robbins. I don't know if you've seen it yet, the story about the fire-bombing, the black family, and the Jamaican Queens. I wouldn't have done a s story dealing with such a heavy racial issue in Cage that soon because I knew I'd be in trouble for doing it. When I knew it was going to be my last issue, well, I picked up a plot that I wanted to do most, and that happened to be it.

There's a problem, though, in dealing with actual places. When you're doing a series like the Black Panther set in Wakanda, or you're doing Killraven as set in the future, people can look at it and say,"That's not me, that's not us," and they can divorce it; "That's other people, they're the schmucks who're doing this kind of thing." When you use a place like Jamaica Queens- and I used Jamaica Queens because I had some very personal racist happenings occur to some friends of mine and myself when we were out there that disturbed me greatly. I said someday I'm going to write a story about this.

I didn't make up the fire-bombings of black familes either. Someone said to me,"Well you didn't show the white side of it." And I said there's no white or black side here, either you believe it's alright to bomb other people's houses or you don't. That's what the choice is, there isn't really any other choice there. If you think that's alright to do, then there's something wrong.

At any rate, then they said that I was going to do the book again because the other writer had decided not to do it. And so with the new ones coming out, we started to project again, have the IRS come in. That's why the latest book is called Death, Taxes, and Springtime Vendettas. The case is that Cage is being pursued by the

Internal Revenue Service for back taxes and why he hasn't paid any. I picked up some things Archie Goodwin did in the very first Hero for Hire's with Noah Burstein. In that Burstein was a doctor in Seagate prison, and he has mentioned in the first book that there were other experiments before Cage.

We sort of bring that up into light and bring up his past up before him. The one I'm working on now- my last Cage, is called Of Memories Both Vicious and Haunting. 'Kind of memories that haunt Noah Burstein.

Bill: Wasn't one of the Killraven books not approved by the Comics Code?

Don: Yes. I don't know that much about it myself, but I was talking with Doug about it earlier.

When we were doing the "Death-Birth" series with the first issue where we brought in Adam and Eve, the mating pens, and the whole thing with Atalon I said gee, I don't know how the code's going to react to this. I only picked up on what was already done, carried it to a logical extent. If it were Earth and the Martians were firmly ensconced here, what would they do? Yet, I still didn't know how the code would react to it. Also, I don't really believe that there'd ever been a woman quite that pregnant in Code approved comic books before.

It was only intended to be a one issue stand, but by the time we introduced Volcana Ash I realized I had no more room. We only had 14-15 pages at the time, so I said, well, we'll do it next issue. By that time I barely got them to Death-Birth and saved Eve. So I said I'll certainly end it up in the third one. By the time I figured how I was going to destroy Death-Birth and not kill all the Adams and Eves we were halfway through the issue and I had this big chase planned that I'd wanted to do. It went on for four issues.

I was always afraid that all the sudden the Code would realize what we were doing and say," Wait a minute, you can't do this." In the midst of three or four issues just say that you can't do this anymore, and how would we end it? What would we say or do? That never happened. There was never any trouble with the Code Seals on any of those particular books that I know of. None of the lines were objected to. One I had to change because the attorney at Marvel said it had to be changed. We had a bit where these metallic stalkers- birdlike creatures- have attacked Killraven and his group. One of them sinks its fangs into Killraven's neck and M'Shulla blasts its body off, but the neck is still stuck in Killraven's neck. Volcana comes up to Killraven and she says,"What's the matter Red, did somebody give you the bird? How long are you going to hold onto it?" They said no, you can't do that. I thought it was kind of cute myself but, so I forget. We came up with something else and we substituted it.

The next issue didn't have a Code Seal. Now, I don't know wheth-

er that was because the book was late. It may have been because in that issue he entered the music room. Killraven is swallowed by the cosmic womb and the there's a sexual cadence to the writing. I don't know if the Code appreciated that. But, I think it worked well, and I think that it had something to say about life. I hoped that they wouldn't have objected to it.

Bill: Well Doug, to keep you from being bored.... Don has gone off into things not typical of comics.

Don: And have I paid for it!

Doug: Now wait a minute, he did.

Don: He did. He did and he has paid the price.

Bill: You (Doug) seem to do more of the standard type of comics in a greater volume. I wanted to know if you've wanted to do anything experimental inside or out of comics.

Doug: Wanted to? I don't understand. I think that I was one of the first to do expermental things.

Bill: I mean comic-like but outside of Marvel. Something new like Fiction Illustrated or Kane's Morning Star Press?

Doug: I'm going to do some Fiction Illustrated supposedly. I just met Byron Preiss and he said that he wanted me to do one of them or more. So, I suppose that I will be doing it.

Bill: No definite plans?

Doug: Oh no, it's just the first time I met him and he took my phone number and so on.

I have done underground comics and fanzine comic strips. All of those certainly were outside of the typical Marvel Comics type stuff. I've worked with Corben.

Don: I'd say that your Shang-Chi is outside of the typical Marvel type material.

Doug: I don't. I don't think it is. I just think it's well done.

Don: That's what I mean. (Laughs)

Bill: Do you ever get mad with Paul because of missed issues and fill-ins? Doesn't it hurt the continuity badly?

Doug: That should stop now. Now that there's no Giant and he won't be inking his own pencils since that great experiment fell through.

Bill: I thought that that was his best looking stuff.

Doug: Of course it was, it was beautiful. But the very next issue was a fill-in because it took him so long. So, obviously he cannot ink his own art as he thought he would be able to. From now on I don't think that there'll be any more fill-ins. I think we've seen the last one.

Bill: You have the new Fu-Manchu series coming up.

Doug: Yes, it'll show show Shang Chi's father in a new light. In a new/old light, closer to the pulps but even more realistically.

(Ed. note.- It was about this time that I realized that my cheap cassette was being indecently assaulted by the tape recorder. Somehow all the talk up to this point was salvaged. A quick change and we were on our way.)

Doug: Do you want me to start all over?

Bill: No, that's alright, just go on. Maybe you can fill it in when you edit this! (Laughs)

Doug: Oh Christ! Let's see. What're you saying Don?

Don: I don't think that the Comic Book Code will allow you to say that.

Doug: Oh well. I'll quickly recap it. Six part series, seven actually with an epilog issue. Fu Manchu. magnum opus as it were, with rotating narration. First part is by Shang-Chi in the normal first person present tense. Second part is by Reston under interrogation, very belligerently narrated. The beginning of that is Eisnerish, with the book starting with Reston under a sole light. The identity of the interrogáter isn't revealed until the end. The third part is narrated by Black Jack Tarr in the form of on-going progress ports, sort of in the future tense. He's on a mission from which he's not expected to return. The fourth part will then be told by Leiko, in a sort of stream of conciousness thought pattern. Like Shang-Chi, but very different at the same time. It's also a thought process, but with a very rare use of the first person pronoun. She will not refer to herself; it's a stream of conciousness impression of ongoing things.

The fifth part is bySmith; extracts from the journal of Sir Denis Nayland Smith. 'Sixth part by Fu Manchu. And then as usual, back to Shang-Chi in the last part, thereby focusing on all these different characters and examining their opinions of Shang-Chi and their observations of character. It may seem at first by taking the

STARSMITH JONES
EXACTLY ONE HOUR AGO STARSMITH JONES CAME ACROSS THE MILE LONG PHOENIX. NORMALLY JONES WOULDN'T CARE ABOUT AN OLD SHIP, BUT THIS ONE INTERESTS HIM FOR TWO REASONS. ONE HE HAS NEVER SEEN A SHIP LIKE IT AND TWO, IN FOUR HOURS THE PHOENIX'S COURSE WILL TAKE IT INTO THE CENTER OF THE AT TO NEAR STAR
PHOENIX
WRITTEN AND DRAWN BY
DAVE MOWRY
INKED BY
GENE DAY

PHOENIX

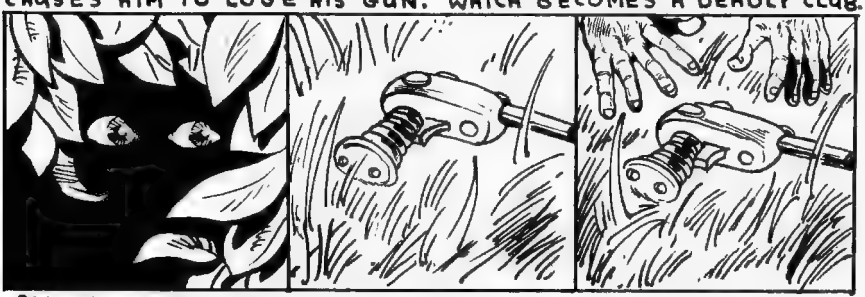
JONES HAS BEEN MANY THINGS MERCENARY, EXPLORER, MERCHANT BUT NEVER A SCAVENGER.

HOWEVER TALES OF OTHERS WHO HAD FOUND FORTUNES IN THE HAULS OF OLD SHIPS, IS TEMPTING ENOUGH FOR JONES TO TRY HIS HAND AT IT.

THERE ARE TWO HUMANS, A MALE AND A FEMALE, IF HUMAN THEY CAN BE CALLED. THEIR BODIES ARE HIDEOUS ...
... AND APPARENTLY THEIR INTENTIONS ARE THE SAME. AND BEFORE JONES HAS TIME TO REACT, THE TWO LAUNCH THEIR ...

THE MALE IS TO STRONG FOR JONES. HE EASILY PRESSES HIM BACK AND IN DOING SO CAUSES HIM TO LOSE HIS GUN.

IN THE MEANTIME THE FEMALE FINDS A FALLEN TREE LIMB, WHICH BECOMES A DEADLY CLUB.

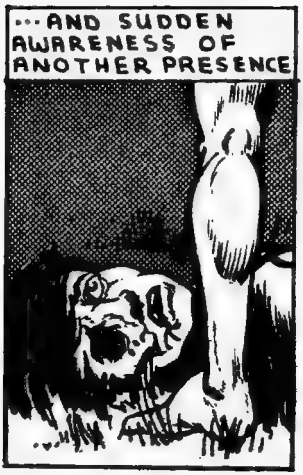


ALL THE TIME THE PAIR OF UNSEEN EYES WATCH AS JONES IS BEATEN...

...REALIZING THAT JONES DOES NOT STAND A CHANCE...

... AND THEN DECIDES HE MUST ACT FOR JONES.

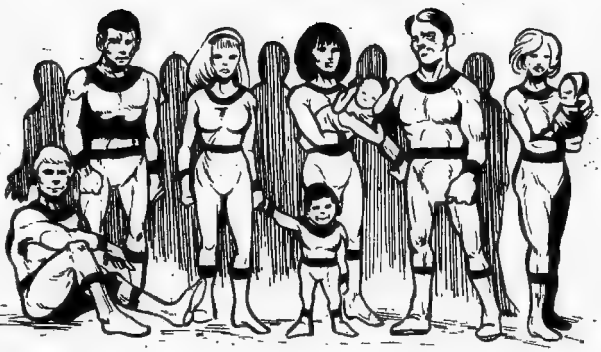
AND SINCE THE SHUTTLE BAY DOORS ARE OPEN HE WON'T HAVE ANY TROUBLE GETTING IN.
AIR LOCK 2
JONES HAS NO IDEA WHAT HE WILL FIND IN THE HAUL OF THE PHOENIX, SO HE IS PREPARED FOR ANYTHING...
...ANYTHING BUT THIS...
...A JUNGLE!
AND THE MORE HE EXPLORES THIS JUNGLE THE MORE AMAZED HE IS BY WHAT HE SEES.
AND TWO UNSEEN EYES ARE AMAZED AT WHAT THEY SEE.
THEN SUDDENLY BEHIND JONES, THE FIRST NOISE HE HAS HEARD ON THE PHOENIX.



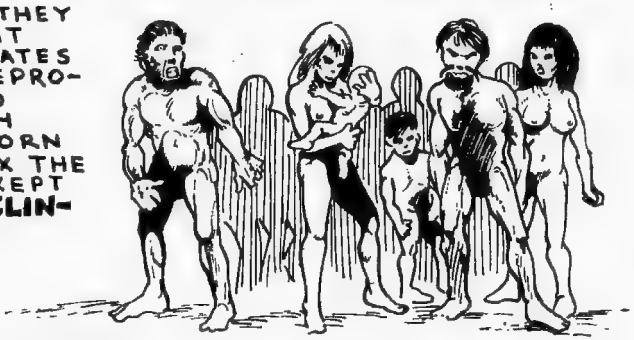
"THIS IS THE PHOENIX... "

"...A LONG TIME AGO A PLACE CALLED EARTH BUILT THIS SHIP AND SEVERAL OTHERS JUST LIKE IT. THEY MANNED THE PHOENIX WITH A CREW AND SENT THEM INTO SPACE TO FIND NEW WORLDS AND COLONIZE THEM FOR MANKIND..."
PHOENIX
"...THE PHOENIX ALSO CONTAINED ALL KINDS OF PLANTS FOR THE CREW TO USE ON THEIR NEW WORLD..."
SAFE
DANGER
RADIATION LEVEL
"...THEN SEVERAL YEARS INTO DEEP SPACE FLIGHT THE PHOENIX HAD SOME KIND OF PROBLEM..."
"...THE TROUBLE COULDN'T BE FIXED. SO THOSE THAT COULD ESCAPED FROM THE PHOENIX IN SMALL SHIPS TO TRY AND FIND A NEW PLANET...
2
1
3
...THOSE THAT REMAINED ON THE SHIP MOVED INTO THE HAUL'S JUNGLE TO PREPARE TO DIE, IN WHAT THEY HAD LEFT OF THEIR HOMEWORLD..."

BUT THEY DID NOT DIE RIGHT AWAY. FROM THE SHIPS PROBLEM THEY WERE SLOWLY **POISONED.** THE OLDER THEY GOT THE LESS **HUMAN** THEY BECAME.
... THEY ALSO BORE CHILDREN ...



...BUT IN TIME THEY DISCOVERED THAT EACH PAIR OF MATES COULD ONLY REPRODUCE **ONE** CHILD ...SO WITH EACH GENERATION BORN ON THE PHOENIX THE POPULATION KEPT STEADILY **DECLINING** ...

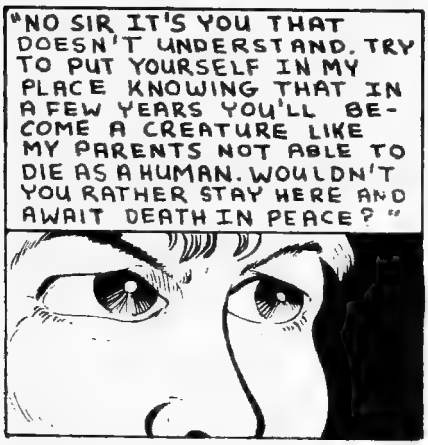


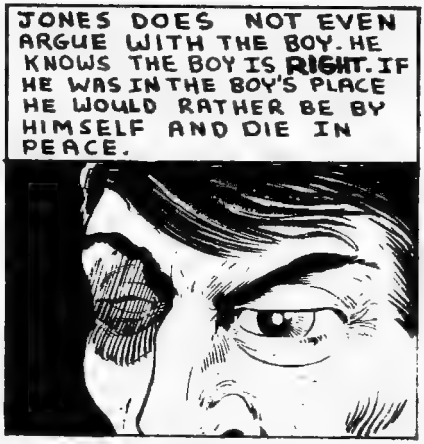
...UNTIL AT LAST AFTER SEVERAL GENERATIONS THERE WAS ONLY ONE MALE AND FEMALE LEFT ON THE PHOENIX AND THEY BORE THE **LAST** CHILD THAT WOULD EVER BE BORN ON THE PHOENIX."

BUT THAT MEANS YOU'RE THE LAST OFFSPRING AND THOSE TWO THINGS YOU KILLED WERE YOUR OWN PARENTS !!
YES, BUT I DON'T REGRET KILLING THEM. THEY WERE IN GREAT PAIN AND SLOWLY DYING. I DIDN'T KILL THEM JUST TO SAVE YOU, BUT TO END THEIR SUFFERING.

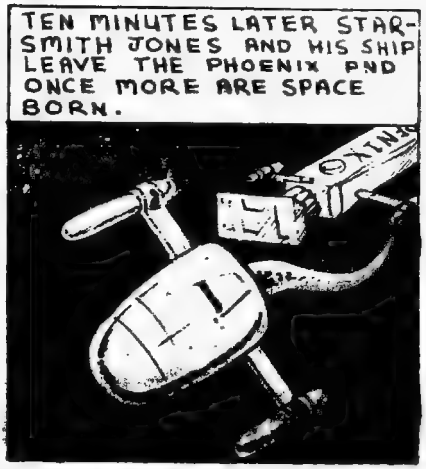
I···I DON'T KNOW WHAT I SHOULD SAY. I SHOULD THANK YOU FOR SAVING MY LIFE, BUT THEN I WOULD BE THANKING YOU FOR KILLING YOUR PARENTS. WELL NO TIME FOR THANKYOUS NOW, ANYWAY. WE GOT TO GET OFF THE PHOENIX AND FAST. FOUR HOURS ARE ALMOST UP.

SORRY SIR I'm NOT GOING WITH YOU.
WHAT?! ARE YOU CRAZY, KID?
PERHAPS SIR I DON'T KNOW, BUT I'M NOT LEAVING THE SHIP.
LISTEN KID YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND..


"NO SIR IT'S YOU THAT DOESN'T UNDERSTAND. TRY TO PUT YOURSELF IN MY PLACE KNOWING THAT IN A FEW YEARS YOU'LL BECOME A CREATURE LIKE MY PARENTS NOT ABLE TO DIE AS A HUMAN. WOULDN'T YOU RATHER STAY HERE AND AWAIT DEATH IN PEACE?"


JONES DOES NOT EVEN ARGUE WITH THE BOY. HE KNOWS THE BOY IS RIGHT. IF HE WAS IN THE BOY'S PLACE HE WOULD RATHER BE BY HIMSELF AND DIE IN PEACE.

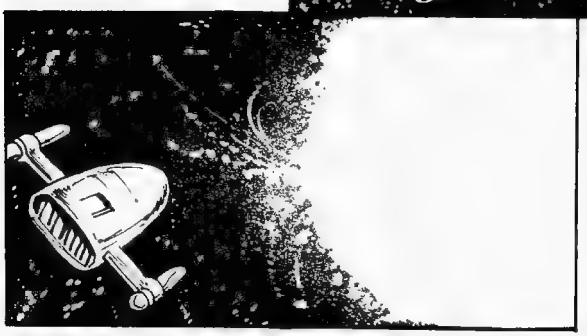
THEY SPEAK NO MORE. EACH CAN SEE THE UNDERSTANDING IN THE OTHER'S EYES AND WITH A SHAKING OF HANDS THEY PART COMPANY FOREVER, BUT AS FRIENDS.


TEN MINUTES LATER STARSMITH JONES AND HIS SHIP LEAVE THE PHOENIX AND ONCE MORE ARE SPACE BORN.

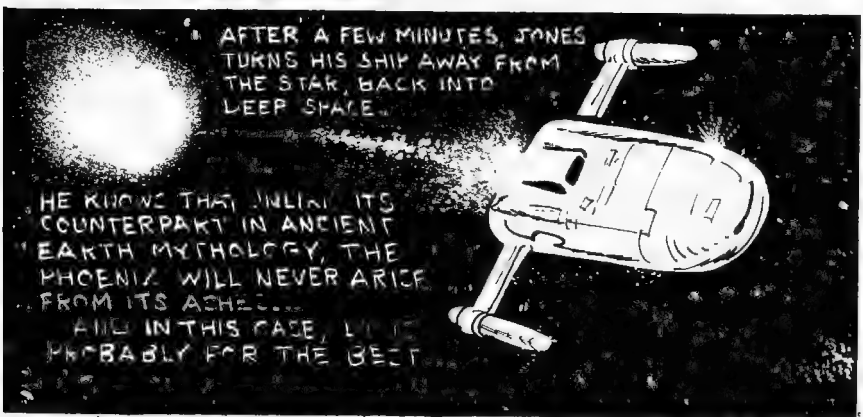
PERHAPS JONES SHOULDN'T HAVE STAYED TO WATCH, BUT HE DID.

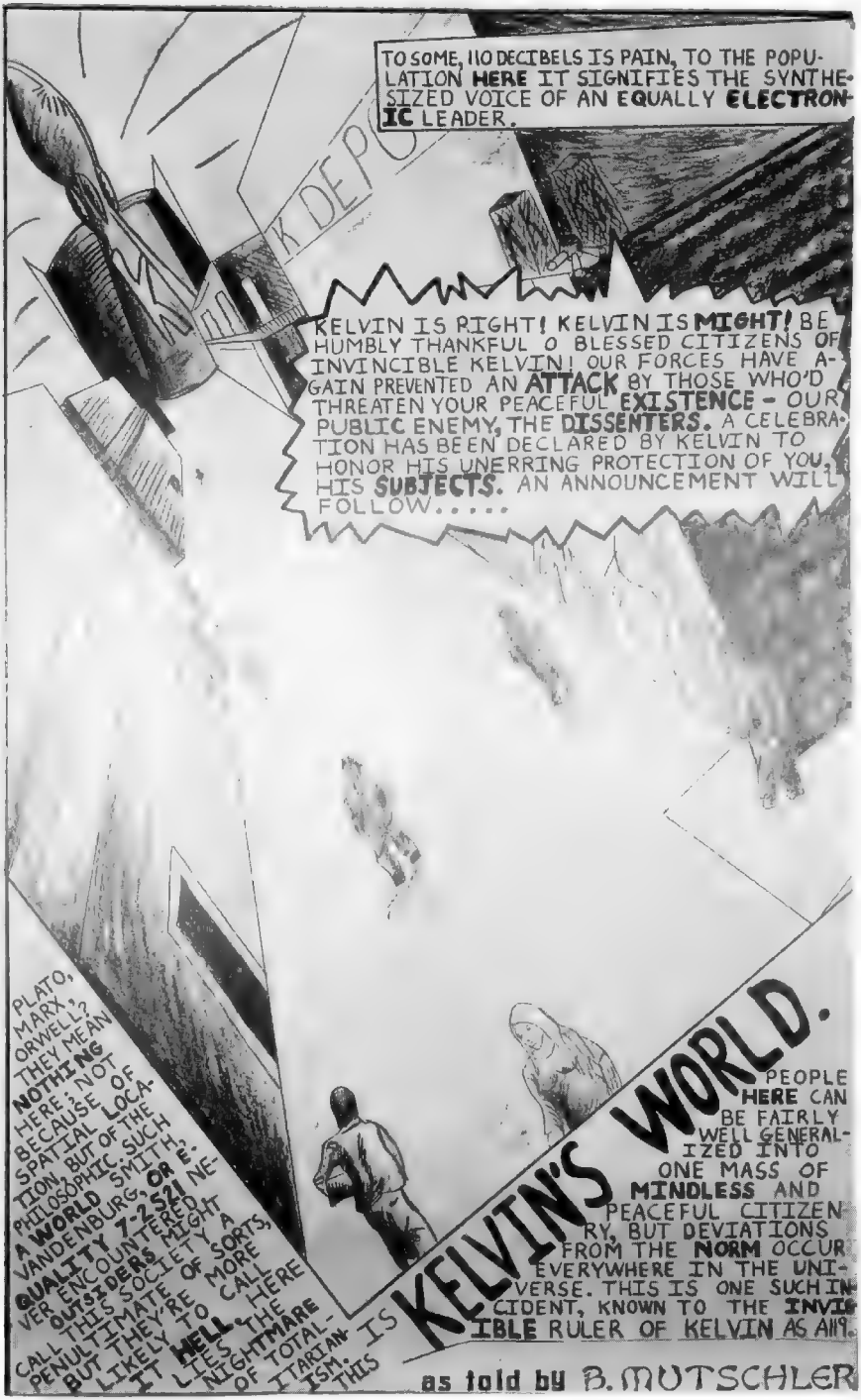
JONES FELT NO REGRET FOR NOT TELLING THE BOY THAT IF HE STAYED ON THE PHOENIX HE WOULD BE DEAD IN ONLY A FEW MINUTES...

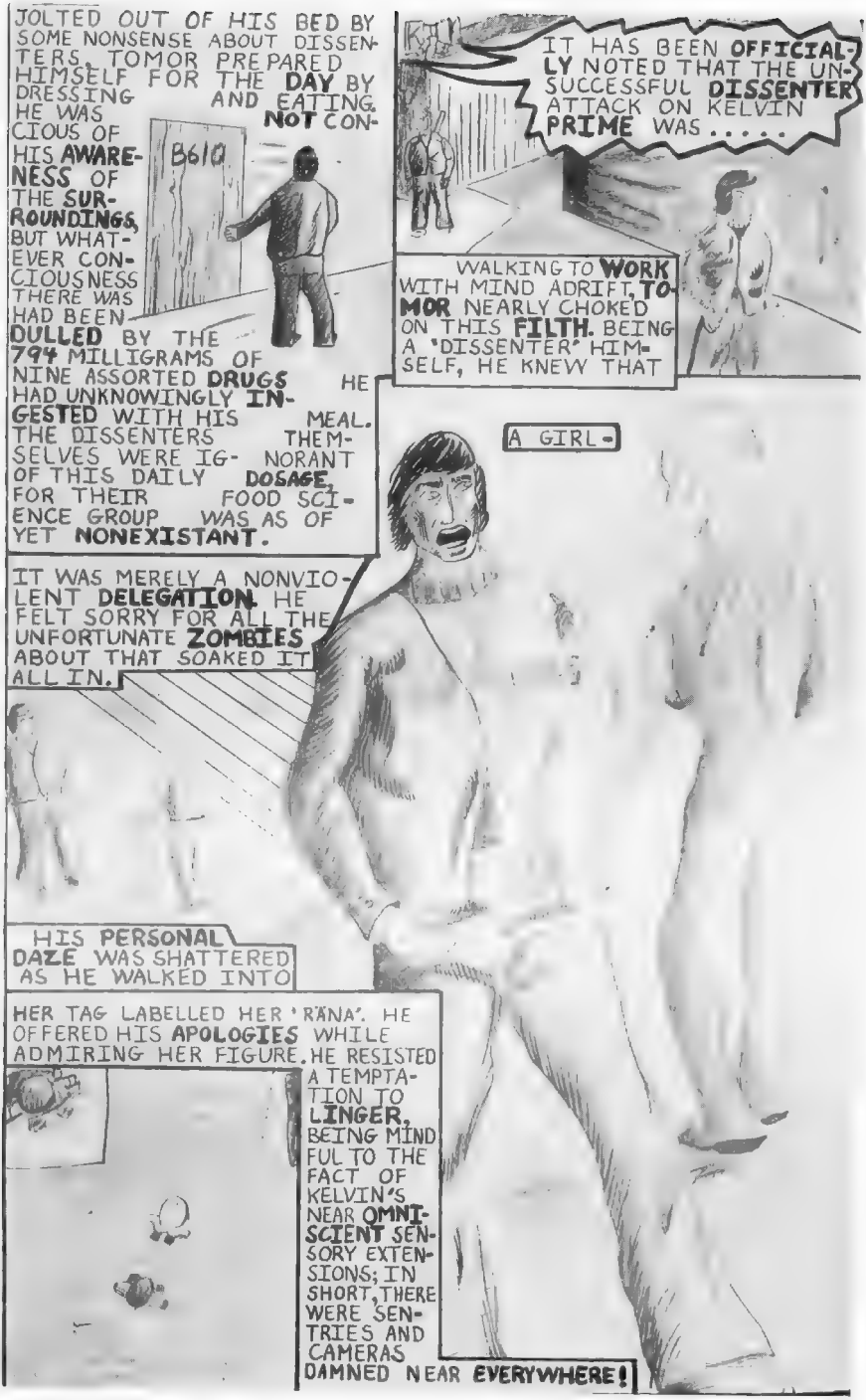
...JONES ONLY REGRETED THAT THE BOY HAD TO DIE AT ALL.

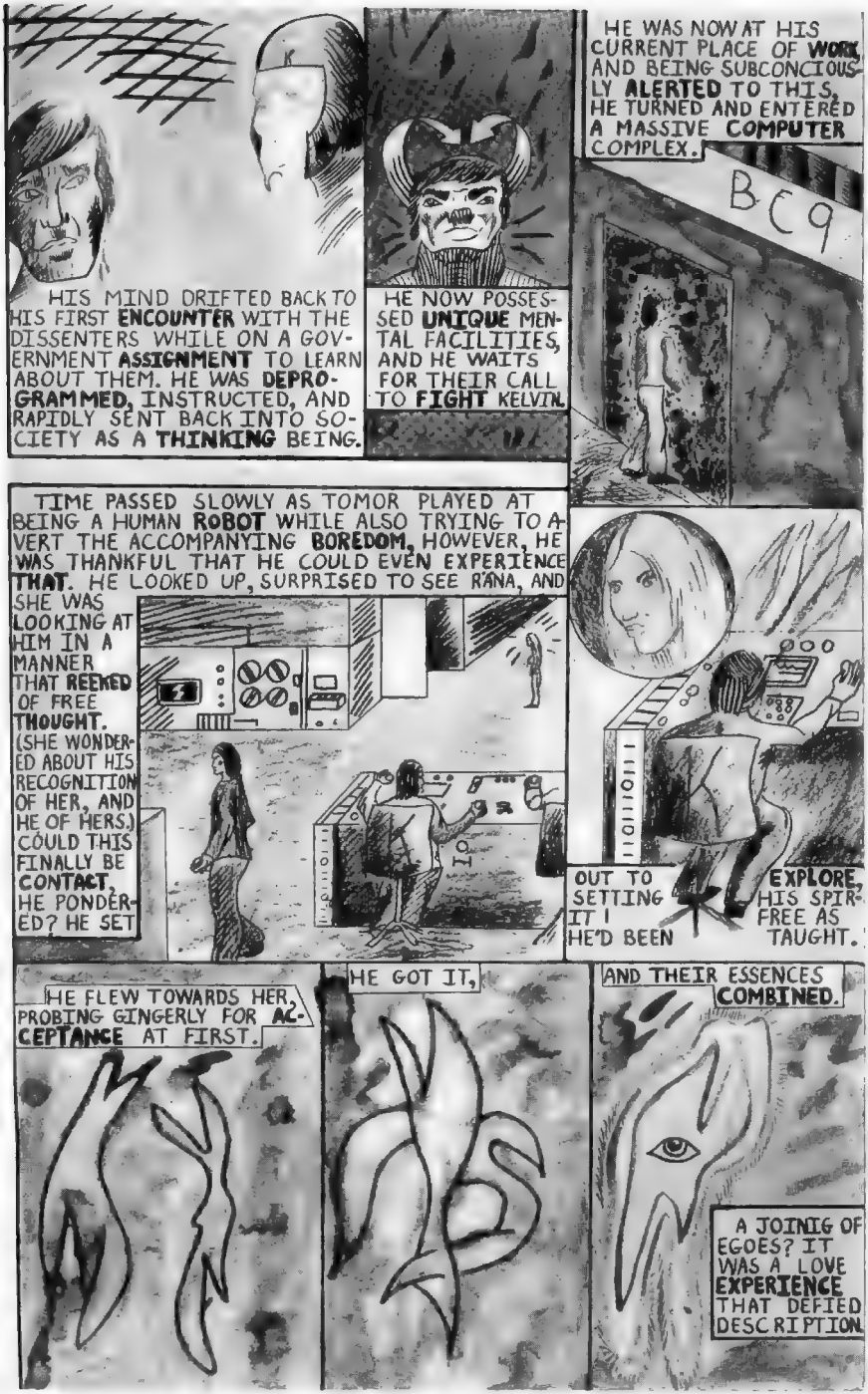


AND NOW THAT THE BOY WAS DEAD, JONES KNEW THAT IF THE BOY COULD HAVE HE WOULD HAVE THANKED JONES FOR LETTING HIM DIE STILL AS A HUMAN.


AFTER A FEW MINUTES, JONES TURNS HIS SHIP AWAY FROM THE STAR, BACK INTO DEEP SPACE.
HE KNOWS THAT UNLIKE ITS COUNTERPART IN ANCIENT EARTH MYTHOLOGY, THE PHOENIX WILL NEVER ARISE FROM ITS ASHES...
AND IN THIS CASE, IT'S PROBABLY FOR THE BEST.

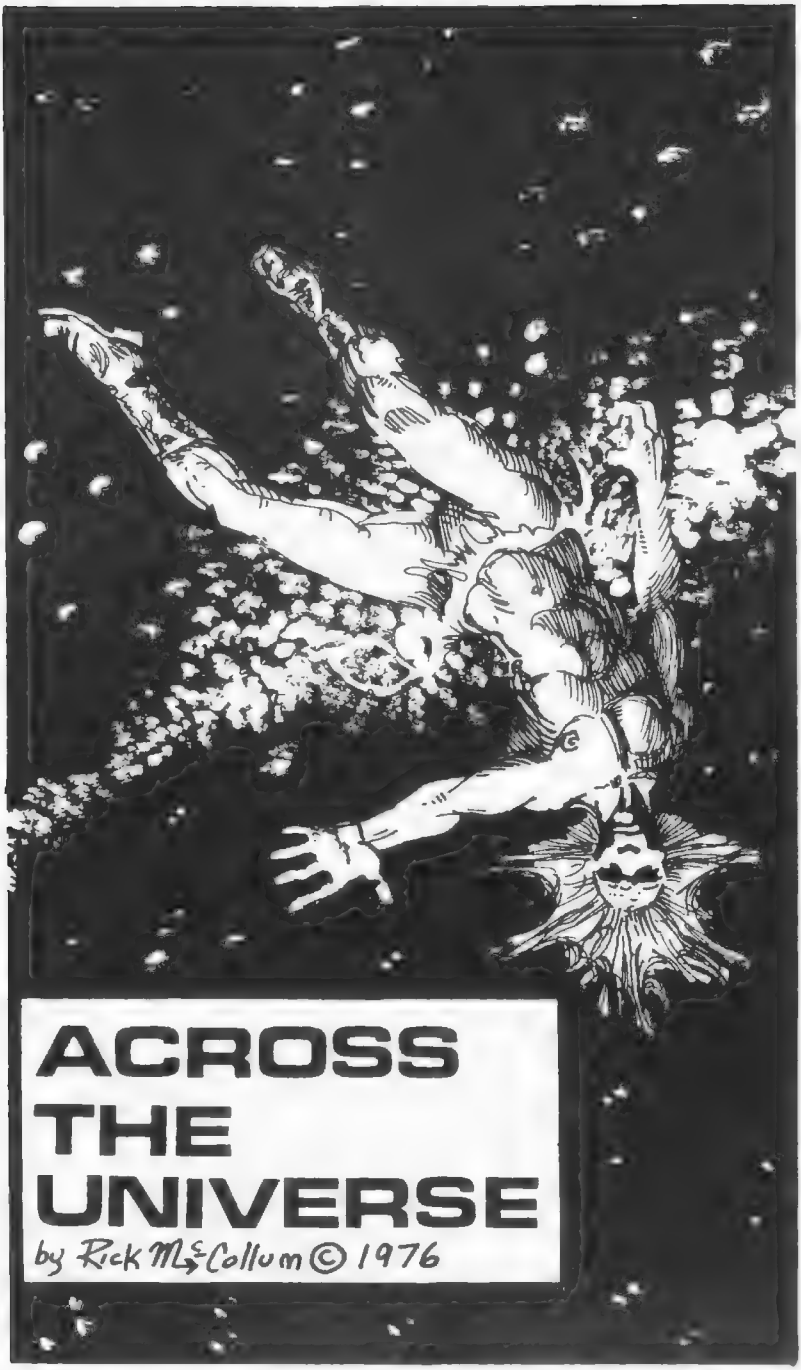

TO SOME, 110 DECIBELS IS PAIN, TO THE POPULATION HERE IT SIGNIFIES THE SYNTHESIZED VOICE OF AN EQUALLY ELECTRONIC LEADER.
KELVIN IS RIGHT! KELVIN IS MIGHT! BE HUMBLY THANKFUL O BLESSED CITIZENS OF INVINCIBLE KELVIN! OUR FORCES HAVE AGAIN PREVENTED AN ATTACK BY THOSE WHO'D THREATEN YOUR PEACEFUL EXISTENCE - OUR PUBLIC ENEMY, THE DISSENTERS. A CELEBRATION HAS BEEN DECLARED BY KELVIN TO HONOR HIS UNERRING PROTECTION OF YOU, HIS SUBJECTS. AN ANNOUNCEMENT WILL FOLLOW.....
PLATO, MARX, ORWELL? THEY MEAN NOTHING HERE: NOT BECAUSE OF SPATIAL LOCATION, BUT OF THE PHILOSOPHIC SUCH SMITH: A WORLD OR E' VANDENBURG, QUALITY 7-2-52! NEVER ENCOUNTERED OUTSIDERS MIGHT CALL THIS SOCIETY A PENULTIMATE OF SORTS, BUT THEY'RE MORE LIKELY TO CALL IT HELL. THE NIGHTMARE OF TOTALITARIANISM. THIS IS
KELVIN'S WORLD.
PEOPLE HERE CAN BE FAIRLY WELL GENERALIZED INTO ONE MASS OF MINDLESS AND PEACEFUL CITIZENRY, BUT DEVIATIONS FROM THE NORM OCCUR EVERYWHERE IN THE UNIVERSE. THIS IS ONE SUCH INCIDENT, KNOWN TO THE INVISIBLE RULER OF KELVIN AS ALI9.
as told by B. MUTSCHLER


JOLTED OUT OF HIS BED BY SOME NONSENSE ABOUT DISSENTERS, TOMOR PREPARED HIMSELF FOR THE DAY BY DRESSING AND EATING. HE WAS NOT CONCIOUS OF HIS AWARENESS OF THE SURROUNDINGS, BUT WHATEVER CONCIOUSNESS THERE WAS HAD BEEN DULLED BY THE 794 MILLIGRAMS OF NINE ASSORTED DRUGS HE HAD UNKNOWINGLY INGESTED WITH HIS MEAL. THE DISSENTERS THEMSELVES WERE IGNORANT OF THIS DAILY DOSAGE, FOR THEIR FOOD SCIENCE GROUP WAS AS OF YET NONEXISTANT.
B610
IT HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY NOTED THAT THE UNSUCCESSFUL DISSENTER ATTACK ON KELVIN PRIME WAS . . . . .
WALKING TO WORK WITH MIND ADRIFT, TOMOR NEARLY CHOKED ON THIS FILTH. BEING A 'DISSENTER' HIMSELF, HE KNEW THAT
A GIRL-
IT WAS MERELY A NONVIOLENT DELEGATION. HE FELT SORRY FOR ALL THE UNFORTUNATE ZOMBIES ABOUT THAT SOAKED IT ALL IN.
HIS PERSONAL DAZE WAS SHATTERED AS HE WALKED INTO
HER TAG LABELLED HER 'RÄNA'. HE OFFERED HIS APOLOGIES WHILE ADMIRING HER FIGURE. HE RESISTED A TEMPTATION TO LINGER, BEING MINDFUL TO THE FACT OF KELVIN'S NEAR OMNISCIENT SENSORY EXTENSIONS; IN SHORT, THERE WERE SENTRIES AND CAMERAS DAMNED NEAR EVERYWHERE!


HIS MIND DRIFTED BACK TO HIS FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE DISSENTERS WHILE ON A GOVERNMENT ASSIGNMENT TO LEARN ABOUT THEM. HE WAS DEPROGRAMMED, INSTRUCTED, AND RAPIDLY SENT BACK INTO SOCIETY AS A THINKING BEING.
HE NOW POSSESSED UNIQUE MENTAL FACILITIES, AND HE WAITS FOR THEIR CALL TO FIGHT KELVIN.
HE WAS NOW AT HIS CURRENT PLACE OF WORK, AND BEING SUBCONCIOUSLY ALERTED TO THIS, HE TURNED AND ENTERED A MASSIVE COMPUTER COMPLEX.
BC9
TIME PASSED SLOWLY AS TOMOR PLAYED AT BEING A HUMAN ROBOT WHILE ALSO TRYING TO AVERT THE ACCOMPANYING BOREDOM, HOWEVER, HE WAS THANKFUL THAT HE COULD EVEN EXPERIENCE THAT. HE LOOKED UP, SURPRISED TO SEE RANA, AND SHE WAS LOOKING AT HIM IN A MANNER THAT REEKED OF FREE THOUGHT. (SHE WONDERED ABOUT HIS RECOGNITION OF HER, AND HE OF HERS.) COULD THIS FINALLY BE CONTACT, HE PONDERED? HE SET OUT TO SETTING IT ! HE'D BEEN EXPLORE, HIS SPIRFREE AS TAUGHT.
HE FLEW TOWARDS HER, PROBING GINGERLY FOR ACCEPTANCE AT FIRST.
HE GOT IT,
AND THEIR ESSENCES COMBINED.
A JOINIG OF EGOES? IT WAS A LOVE EXPERIENCE THAT DEFIED DESCRIPTION.

THE REST OF THE DAY PASSED FITTING PERFECTLY IN TO ROUTINE, BUT THAT NIGHT WAS A VIOLENT CHANGE FROM THE NORM; HE AWOKE AND LEFT HIS APARTMENT,
DRAWN
BY
A CALL FROM WITHIN.
HE STALKED THE CITY,
DEPARTING FROM IT TO EVENTUALLY REACH UNKNOWNS LEFT FROM A BYGONE ERA. THE SENSATIONS STOPPED.
RANA?
LATER THAT NIGHT:
A WHIRRING . . . .
CITIZENS, YOU ARE FORBIDDEN TO
SMASH
PROUD, HE LOOKS DOWN AT THE BRICK IN HIS HAND TRIUMPHANTLY.
"WE MUST FLEE. IT'S SENDING A DISTRESS SIGNAL - I KNOW!"
FLEE THEY DO, THROUGH WOODS AND RUINS.
TO RETURN TO THE CITY.

HALT CITIZENS!
KELVIN! I SEEK KNOWLEDGE!
THEY DON'T, AND HE TURNS TO HIS MASTER....
THE MASSIVE MIND STIRRED. HE-IT THOUGHT WITH A SWIRL OF ELECTRONS, AND:
ALERT, DISSENTERS! THEIR LEADER IS NOW UPON US! DESTROY THIS MENACE!
SCAPEGOAT?
BLAM
HE FELL INTO A CONVENIENTLY PLACED ALLEY FEELING THE AGONY OF BULLETS AND THE RAPID DRAINING OF HIS LIFE.
THE CITY AROSE, WITH A VENGENCE.
SHE BENT DOWN, KISSED HIM, AND SPOKE, "WE MUST LEAVE NOW, JUST AS WE'VE BEEN TAUGHT"
"I KNOW."
SHE TOOK HIS HAND AS THEY LOOKED TO THE HEAVENS.
"DIE," SAID THE SENTRY, ENTERING THE ALLEY WITH RIFLE READY. HOWEVER, IT WAS TOO LATE, FOR RA'NA AND TOMOR HAD ALREADY LEFT KELVIN'S WORLD.
-FIN-


ACROSS
THE
UNIVERSE
by Rick McCollum © 1976

FIRST CLASS STARTROOPER JACOB LANCE HUNG IN THE WARM BLANKET OF NETHER-SPACE AND SPUN SLIGHTLY, LIKE A PUPPET ON AN ABANDONED STRING, EVER SO SLIGHTLY A'TWIRL. A CURIOUS SENSE OF **DREAD** PLAYED GAMES WITH HIS EGO, AND THIS WAS A FEELING THAT WAS NEW AND **UNNERVING** TO HIM. ANY FEELING WOULD HAVE BEEN WELCOME, BUT TO HAVE HIS FIRST EMOTION OTHER THAN VAGUE CURIOSITY IN 350 THOUSAND YEARS (EARTH-TIME) BE SO UNSETTLING WAS UNFAIR, HE THOUGHT....

WHEN HIS SPACE DREADNOUGHT OMEGA WAS DESTROYED, OH SO LONG AGO, LANCE HAD BEEN FLUNG OUTSIDE INTO THE VACUUM. HE HAD ONLY THE TIME TO HEAR THE COLLISION ALARM BEFORE THE SHOCK. YET, AS HE FRANTICALLY GRASPED THE COLD EMPTINESS, AS HE SAW HIS FELLOW SPACERS EXPLODE IN THE LACK OF PRESSURE, **JACOB LANCE DID NOT DIE.** THE ALL-CONSUMING UNIVERSE HAD BELCHED FORTH SOME UNKNOWN COSMIC BODY TO INTERCEPT AND DESTROY THE OMEGA, YET LANCE SIMPLY WATCHED TO WRECKAGE AND CORPSES GROW SMALLER AND SMALLER, TO FINALLY BECOME NOTHING AS THE VOID SPREAD ITSELF. VANCE RIGHTLY CONSIDERED HIMSELF TO BE CAUGHT WITHIN THE GRAVITATIONAL FIELD OF THE OBJECT WHICH HAD MOWED DOWN HIS SHIP, YET STILL COULD NOT EXPLAIN HIS CONTINUED EXISTANCE. PERHAPS IF HE COULD UNDERSTAND THE IDENTITY OF WHAT HAD STRUCK THE OMEGA... YES... HE EXECUTED A SERIES OF SOMERSAULTS, (SPACE-SURVIVAL TATICS) AN AT LENGTH FACED, NOT A METEROID (AS HE SUSPECTED) OR EVEN ANOTHER SHIP (WHICH HE DOUBTED), **BUT THE FACE OF CHAOS.**

FOR, LOOMING GIGANTIC AGAINST THE GALAXIES BEFORE HIM, HUNG **A ROBED FIGURE OF VAST AND UNKNOWN PROPORTIONS.** IT WAS A BEING OF WHAT SEEMED TO LANCE TO BE NEAR-SUPREME POWER. THE WHOLE SCENE WAS THOUGHT AT FIRST TO BE SPACE-MADDNESS BY LANCE, YET THE MIND OF THE FIGURE WAS SO ENORMOUS, THE INTELLECT SO HUGE, THAT ITS THOUGHTS RANG IN LANCES' MIND. FROM THESE HE LEARNED...

MOST OF THE CREATURES' MUSINGS WERE OBSCURE AND ALIEN TO LANCE, BUT HE GATHERED THAT HE WAS IN TOW TO SOME SORT OF **COSMIC BALANCE.** THE ONE IN THE ROBE WAS THE ULTIMATE **YIN AND YANG** WHO WAS SOMEHOW DOOMED TO ROAM THE COSMOS, IN AN UNENDING QUEST TO CORRECT THE IMBALANCE OF CHAOS AND ORDER. AS HE CAME ACROSS IT OF [illegible] ALL OF THIS DIDN'T BECOME APPARENT TO [illegible] OR MAY NOT HAVE TAKEN HIM [illegible] TELL WITH NOTHING TO [illegible] INFORMATION. AS FAR [illegible] SUSPENDED IN SOME SORT OF ETHER TRAIL WHICH DRAGGED HIM ALONG IN THE BALANCE'S **WAKE OF MYSTERY,** AND SOMEHOW KEPT HIM ALIVE AND SEEMINGLY IMMORTAL.

BUT WHAT A GRAND AND GLORIOUS ETERNITY IT WAS. LANCE SAW THE UNIVERSE OPEN UP BEFORE HIM, AND LEARNED HOW SMALL THE OUTER SPACE OF MAN REALLY WAS. TO VISIT PARENTS OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM, TO SEE PLANETS DIE, SUNS GO NOVA, OTHER RACES RISE AND FALL. THINK: TO GO TRAVERSE THE ANGLES OF SPACE, TO CROSS THE DIMENSIONS, TO MEET... DARE HE THINK IT?... **GODS!** AT FIRST HE WAS FULL OF FEARS, WHICH GRADUALLY FADED TO MERE CURIOSITY, SECURE IN KNOWING THAT HE WAS TOO SMALL FOR THE BALANCE TO NOTICE, AND THAT HE

WAS EVER-PROTECTED BY THE BALANCE. WHO OR WHAT COULD EVER THREATEN **ONE SUCH AS THIS?** AND, FINALLY, THE CURIOSITY MELTED INTO NUMBNESS, AS JACOB LANCE BEGAN TO **SEE TOO MUCH!** WHAT DRIVES AND MOTIVATIONS THE BALANCE HAD WERE A CONSTANT WONDER TO LANCE, BECAUSE ETERNITY, EVEN AN ETERNITY OF WONDERS, BORED HIM AFTER A WHILE. THE MORTAL MIND WAS BUILT FOR ONLY SO MUCH, THEN IT WOULD RETREAT INTO ITSELF. IT WAS THIS WAY FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. HOWEVER, ABOUT TWO THOUSAND OR SO YEARS AGO, WHILE FLITTING TO AND FRO WITH THE BALANCE.... **LANCE BEGAN TO NOTICE SOMETHING ODD.** IT TOOK A COUPLE OF HUNDRED YEARS TO GRASP THE PROBLEM, BUT AT LAST LANCE THOUGHT HE HAD IT: **THE UNIVERSE WAS COMING TOGETHER.**

AN ETERNITY OF SPACE-HOPPING HAD MADE LANCE VERY FAMILIAR WITH THE LOCATIONS OF STAR-CLUSTERS. AS FAR AS LANCE COULD DETERMINE, HE AND THE BALANCE WERE AT **THE CORE OF THE UNIVERSE.** THE GALAXIES AND NEBULAE WERE ALL CONVERGING ON ONE FINAL SPOT, DRAWN THERE WITH THE POWER OF THE COSMIC BALANCE. WHAT THIS MEANT SHOCKED LANCE'S MIND OUT OF ITS STUPOR. **THE COSMIC BALANCE WAS ENDING THE UNIVERSE!** RAGNORAK, OBLIVION, ARMAGGEDON, THEY ALL WERE HAPPENING! GRAVITY HAD BEEN INCREASED BY THE BALANCE HERE AT THE CENTER, AND SPACE WAS BEING PULLED IN TOWARDS ITSELF. ALREADY, THE GALAXIES WERE CRASHING TOGETHER, THE ORBITS OF THE PLANETS WERE BECOMING UNDONE, RACES UPON RACES OF SENTINENT BEINGS WERE FACING DOOM, THE VOID WAS COMPRESSING ITSELF, THE DIMENSIONS WERE ALL MERGING WITH ONE ANOTHER, THE ANGLES OF SPACE WERE UNBENDING, DOOMSDAY WAS HERE! **AND LANCE COULD ONLY HANG AND WATCH!**

DESPERATELY, LANCE STRAINED TO PICK UP THE THOUGHTS OF THE BALANCE. YET THE USUALLY MANY AND BOOMING CONJECTURES WERE NOT THERE. A COLD, EMPTY SILENCE GREETED LANCES' BRAIN. HE SCREAMED IN FRUSTRATION AS MATTER, THE MATTER AND STUFF OF LIFE, MERGED UNDER GRAVITYS' REMORSELESS PRESSURE INTO GLOWING ENERGY, WHICH SPED ON TOWARDS THE BALANCE.

THEN HE SAW IT. THE OMNIPOTENT ROBED FIGURE SLOWLY — EVER SO SLOWLY — RAISED UP ITS HANDS AND PULLED BACK ITS COWL, TO REVEAL A HUGE AND GRINNING DEATHS' HEAD. **DOOM RULED THE DAY, AND THE QUIET PEACE OF THE GRAVE WOULD SOON DRIFT QUIETLY OVER ALL.**

THE RUSH WAS ON, AS ENERGY SCREAMED IN THE RACE WITH ENERGY BIRTHED MILLIONS OF LIGHT YEARS AWAY IN THE LAST RACE TO MEET DEATH. IONS GLOWED AND ELECTRONS CRACKLED AS THEY MERGED UNDER THE CRUSHING GRIP OF THE COSMOS' CORE. SOULS DID MEET OTHER SOULS TO BE SMASHED TOGETHER BY THE UNRELENTING PRESSURE. IN HIS TRAVELS WITH THE BALANCE, LANCE KNEW THAT THERE WAS NO AFTERLIFE, AND THE COLD CRIES OF SOULS' TORMENT ASSAILED HIM AS THEY MET BOTH THEIR KINDRED SOULS AND DOOM. TIME WAS ENDING, THE PAST OF ALL WAS DEAD, THE PRESENT DYING, THE FUTURE STILLBORN.

AND ALL THROUGH THIS JACOB LANCE SILENTLY DID SCREAM AND SCREAM AND SCREAM AND SCREAM AND SCREAM AND SCREAM.

AND IT ENDED. IT WAS OVER. ALL AROUND, FOR THE ENDLESS VOID, THERE WAS NOTHING. ALL WAS GONE. ONLY THE BALANCE AND LANCE HUNG IN THE COLD VACUUM.

IT WAS SO FOR AN ETERNITY. YEARS, CENTURIES, EONS PASSED. AND, QUIET IN THE NOTHING, FLOATED THE BALANCE AND LANCE. LANCE HAD SCREAMED FOR A LONG TIME, PERHAPS YEARS, AFTER THE DEATH. BUT AT LAST HE COULD SCREAM NO MORE. ICY, EMPTY, OBLIVIOUS WAS THE SPACE. SPACE WAS AT LAST TRUELY SPACE: NOTHING. AND THE YEARS PASSED. SLOWLY, SLOWLY, LANCE NOTICED.... SOMETHING. THE COSMIC BALANCE WAS SLOWLY TURNING TOWARDS HIM. OH, IT WAS SLOW. A LITTLE BIT AT A TIME. YEARS. AND AT LAST THE GREAT SKULL LOOKED TOWARDS HIM. AND ITS EYES WERE FILLED WITH STARS.

THEN AN EXPLOSION SO GREAT SHATTERED THE SILENCE, SHOOK THE VOID, AND BUFFETED THE MORTAL SO THAT IT DID THREATEN TO TEAR HIM LOOSE FROM THE BALANCES' GRASP. PLANETS HURLED FORTH, SUNS FLARED UP, STARS DOTTED THE PANORAMA — SPACE WAS REBORN AGAIN.

JACOB LANCE HUNG DAZED... SILENT... AMAZED... WHEN ONCE AGAIN A LOUD VOICE ECHOED THROUGH HIS MIND:

"OH FOOLISH MORTAL, DO NOT BE SO TAKEN ABACK BY ALL THAT YOU SEE. ALL IS AS IT ONCE WAS, THE CYCLE IS COMPLETED, THE WHEEL HAS TURNED. I HAVE KNOWN OF YOU'RE PRESENCE WITH ME FOR MILLENIA, YET ONLY NOW, BEFORE I BEGIN MY TASK ANEW, AM I FREE TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU. I AM DEATH BUT I AM ALSO LIFE, YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT ONE IS BUT A DIFFERENT ASPECT OF THE OTHER. BUT I AM DRAWN AGAIN... SO FAREWELL!"

AND LANCE LOOKED AGAIN TO THE FACE OF THE COSMIC BALANCE. IT WAS THAT OF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, A MOTHER, AND SHE WAS LAUGHING.

END.

THE WINNER

M. Don Whipple was a poor but busy hack;
He wrote brisk stories for the science-fiction trades
Of lean, hard heroes of the interstellar raids
But craved much more than mere beans and a shack.

He saw great charlatans doing very well,
From Count Cagliostro down to modern days.
He found if he dolled up his science-fiction frays
And called them facts, they were easier to sell.

He guaranteed to make all his suckers like God
And fiddled with their minds until some went mad,
Set up a storm troop in uniforms clad,
Organized a church as a colorful façade.

M. Don Whipple now lives aboard his smack
On vast sums stashed in a Swiss vault snug.
His onetime colleagues grind away and plug
At writing science fiction for beans and a shack.

Moral: Honesty is its own reward, but there
is something to be said for gall, too.

L. Sprague de Camp
8/22/75

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narration from him that we will not be focusing on him as much as in the past..... what's going on here?

Don: (in between mouthfuls of hard pretzels and sips of beer) Crunch On the tape with the pretzels, see, and she (Debbie James who letters Werewolf by Night and who lives with Doug) said to dunk them first. (.... You think I'm joking? The pretzels weren't that noisy, but it did sound strange ..CHOMP..CHOMP...)

Doug: Anyway, even though it may seem like we're stealing Shang-Chi's thunder, I think that we'll actually examine him more than usual, if you know what I mean- seeing him in a different light.

Bill: Are the Planet of the Apes adaptations relatively easy for

you to write? Do you work directly from the movie scripts?

Doug: Yes, I have the scripts which very often have to be changed. Even when I remain faithful to them they have made changes in the midst of filming. So, the scripts I have are not exactly what appeared on the screen. For example, at the end of the fourth one, I think, the penultimate one, they have Caesar kill Governor Breck at the end of th the script. In the movie- and it's a good thing I had seen the movie not long before that- he relents and allows Breck to live thereby permitting him to be the villian in the fifth movie. If I had just followed the script and had not remembered what had happened at the end of that movie and killed him off, all the sudden here he is again in the next movie!

So, I work from the scripts but you have to rework them, and I even have to change a lot of the dialogue.

I suppose that in certain ways they're easier than other things. At least you don't have to come up with a plot. But they present problems of their own in translating to the comic medium. Plus, I don't want to criticize the Philippino artists at all, but there does remain the fact that I don't think they understand English very well. Some of them, I know some of them do. On top of that, their style of storytelling is almost antithetical to what I was trying to do in the movie adaptations. I was trying to do them in a cinematic type style. And doing a full script I was able to control it very much and do it cinematically. Except, they did not follow the script! not only were they un-

able to do it on their own own, but they just didn't do it when they were told to by the script.

These things were done so far in advance that and handed to so many different artists, the series of adaptations was so far along before I realized that it was not working out the way I wanted it to in some cases. I decided to drop the strict cinematic breakdowns and add captions to make it more like a regular comic book, which is the way the fifth one is done. If I had learned earlier I could hav have done it with the third movie. But then again, there are people in the office and letter writers and so on who think that it succeeds very well. I don't.

Even Craig Russell said that he thought that George Tuska- who's not a Philippino of course, but again I don't think that Georgr is a particularly cinematic type of artist- but Craig liked his story very much. I'm biased, you know, because when you do a full script you see it in your mind and you have a certain idea. Then when it comes out, it's so different that you can't help feeling that this isn't the way it should of been done, this is wrong.

Bill: What do you think they'll do when the movies run out?

Doug: I have no idea. I've been asking them that for close to four months now. I asked Archie whay we're going to do after the fifth movie, and he said,"Well, we'll take War of the Worlds and redraw Killraven's head into a gorilla and...." (Laughs)

Don: Someplace that's called creativity. There it is folks.

Doug: Archie, of course, was kidding Don.

Don: Yes, I know. Archie didn't do that, it wasn't Archie's idea. Apeslayer? Hmmm-hm.

Doug: No. The British books being weeklies did eat up the stuff a lot faster. I wonder myself what'll happen when it runs out. There have been various suggestions; adapting the TV series, the live actio one, then adapting the cartoon one, coming up with a sixth movie of my own.

Bill: Well, that's Terror on the Planet of the Apes, isn't it?

Doug: No, well it is. I think of Terror, the Jason and Alexander stuff and the Alaric Future History stuff as almost being alternate Ape worlds. It could be the same world, and we're presenting it that way- it's just in a different area- but then again while we do remain faithful to a certain amount of the spirit of the movies we also try to make it different. After all, you have the movie adaptations in the back of the book, you don't want exactly the same thing up front. However, if we do decide to do a real sixth movie, I'd try to keep it exactly like the movies and the adaptations that have come before. The Terror and the Future History stuff will always have a little different slant.

Bill: There was that issue drawn by Ed Hannigan.

Doug: That was also a little oddball. You come up with Gunpowder Julius, Steely Dan, those gorillas with Davy Crockett coonskin hats with their riverboats. I cannot conceive of that kind of thing being done in the movies. Or Viking Apes. You know, these gorillas with Viking costumes in the snow and so on. They're really not like the movies.

Bill: Conan the Ape.

Doug: No, Conan's not a Viking. Well, I suppose in a way that he came from the north. But, I mean that these are real Viking gorillas, there's no doubt about it. 'Not just barbarians.

Bill: Do you have any new plans? I know that you're working on Kull. (I point to a stack of Kull artwork.) But, anything besides that you're planning?

Doug: Well, I had an idea for a new book which I was very very reluctant to sort of give to Marvel. I know in a way that sounds like a prima donna and so on; like you're such hot stuff that you don't want to bless Marvel with your creativity. But I can't help it. I've seen the way certain people's character creations were taken away from them, distorted, and so on. I had this idea that I wanted to do another book, and I decided that I'd give Marvel a crack at it. I went up to whoever was the editor at the time- and it's a revolving door up there- and I got as far as the title and there was like supreme crashing disinterest.

Don: Indifference.

Doug: Uh huh. And so I didn't go any farther than the name of the character. I said, OK, screw you assholes, now I'll keep it and I'm going to do it someplace else. Hopefully someday I'll be able to say, aha, see what a great success it is you assholes! You had your chance and you didn't want to do it and now....

Don: (Laughs) Go get 'em Doug.

Bill: Where are you thinking of doing this character?

Doug: Maybe through Byron Preiss. I also thought of maybe trying to turn it into a series of paperbacks. I don't know if first of all I'd be able to land the contracts and so on, and second of all I don't know if I want to do a series. Thirdly, I'm not exactly sure that it's suited to prose. I think it'd be more fun with comic illustrations.

By no means is the concept limited to comics. The concept, I think, is a very good one- it'd be a hell of a lot of fun to read.. It's something that I'd like to read.

Bill: Is there any piece of literature that you'd like to adapt?

Doug: No, absolutely nothing at all. I'd rather do my own stuff.

Bill: How about you, Don?

Doug: Wait a minute, before he starts let me amend that. There are existing characters for which I'd like to write new stories, pastiches. Like Sherlock Holmes, James Bond.

Don: I'd like to do James Bond myself.

Doug: Yes, I know you would, you'll get your chance in a minute. There are any number of existing characters to do. I would not- especially after doing Hound of the Baskervilles, I have no interst whatsoever- well let's not say that- I have less interest in adapting someone else's plot than I do in coming up with my own plot. That's not to say that there are things that I'd turn down. I'm sure that there are plenty of books and even short stories that I'd not mind adapting. But, given a preference....

Bill: What characters do you have ideas on expanding upon?

Doug: James Bond, Sherlock Holmes. I'd like to do Fafrd and the Grey Mouser, which has already been done, and terribly. Sorry Denny, but it was a terrible job. They were not the same characters. I'm starting to get into Travis McGee, and that seems like it's kind of fun. It's not especially suited to comics I suppose.

Don: It could be.

Doug: It could be, but there's nothing really identifiable about him. It's more in the style of writing, not with him as a character.

Don: He's individualistic as a character.

Doug: Yes, but he's not visually distinctive. (Neither was James Bond in Fleming's book's- ed. note.)

Don: He's not a superhero, if that's what you mean.

Doug: Neither is Sherlock Holmes, but Holmes has a visual distinction he has the name and the fame. But McGee, the advantages in him are all in his author rather than in the character .

I can't think of any other characters off the top of my head. There are none gnawing away at my brain, but I'm sure that there are others. I wouldn't mind doing some of- I can't read the Burroughs

stuff anymore- but I'd like to do some of his characters.

Don: Adaptations. I really like the Bond stuff alot. I'd like to see Dr. No done right. I think that'd make a good comic book, there are so many graphic things happening there.

I'd love to see them do the 87th Precint somewhere. I'd love to try it because there's such a great sense of humanity about the strip. As a series as well in that it's one of the few written series that has a good continuity, a progression of characters much beyond what they often do in comics. What they do in comics is after two or three years they stagnate in order to perpetuate the status quo. You don't want to change things. So, it's a tremendous series in that aspect. I don't know how'd it translate into comics, but I think that you could do a good job of it and it'd be fairly interesting.

But like Doug, I'd be more interested in doing my own material. If things go well Rich Buckler and I will be working on a project that'll be a series. I think that it'll be the first time that the undergrounds have done a series, rather than short stories maybe every once in a while featuring the same characters. We'll do a series that I think will be stimulating in that we'll be able to fluctuate to almost any type of story that we want to do. We could go from anything from a straight contemporary drama to an old fashioned mystery to something dealing with....

Bill: With the same character?

Don: With the same character, yes. We could do science fiction, we could do a western, we could do humor, anything. It's all available within the format of the script that I've come up with for this thi thing, and Rich is excited about it.

Bill: What's the name?

Don: I haven't mentioned the title and I don't want to because I don't have copyright things set up.

Doug: Sound's like mine. (Laughs) Mine is very open and it's easy to do just about anything with it.

Don: That's why I tell Rich we gotta get moving on it.

Bill: Would it be as its own book?

Don: Yes, it'd have to be published as its own book. Rich is in the process, we've been working up a poster to help finance the book. I don't know what's going to happen now. I'm going to be in very terrible financial straits/ I won't be doing any comic work for Marvel at all, and I don't know where that's going to lead. Right now I'm writing my last Cage and Killraven. (He had the artwork there at Doug's house- ed. note.) Killraven will be cancelled after that. It's going to be one of the most cryptic final issues ever. Probably the most cryptic comic done since Steranko's SHIELD, his last issue. People will be puzzling about it I would imagine for some time to come as to what it's all about.

Bill: And five years from now they'll tie it all together in an awful way by another writer.

Don: I don't- uh- never know. So I won't tell them. (LAUGHS) Actually, I would have tried to tie things up a bit more if I knew what was going to happen. Craig took it very hard because he has a great endearment to the characters and the series. I think it's evident just to see some of the beautiful artwork he's done. He obviously feels as much for those characters as I do. The first time that I realized that was in the second issue (of Death-Birth, ed. note.) when Old Skull and Killraven are watching Adam and Eve kiss.

'Old Skull has this kind of look on his face and Killraven's just looking up at him... .... It's just exactly the way I felt the expressions those characters should have on their faces at that moment. It was one of the easiest panels I ever had to write, because he had captured it so beautifully.

Bill: What do you look for in comic artists?

Don: Well, I mentioned some of the material. I obviously like the cinematic style. On most of the stuff that I've worked on with Rich Buckler has been a thing where we've sat side by side on the layouts and how we're going to tell the story. It's kind of a stimulating way to work. It takes more time but it's fun to do because both of us will sit there and I'll say,"Look Rich, we've got a sequence coming up in the Klan thing where these Hopis...." Don't ask me where Hopis fit in with the Klan. When I thought this thing was going to be straight it was going to get so bizarre.... I'll never have a chance to get around to it. But there's a sequence where these Hopis come descending down on the Black Panther and a character called Wind Eagle. You see one in the foreground in the first panel, and in che next one you see that one farther down and another one coming into focus. It continually spirals down to them through these four length long panels. I kind of took that from Hitchcock's Birds and transplanted it into a comics thing.

We added a focal point of what was actually happening below by stocking that up close and two little horizontal panels at the top and bottom of the page. So yes, I'm very interested in cinematic and graphic terms. Comics need that, they're a combination of literature and cinema. When they're working well, when the marraige is well blended, I think that they have the ability to transcend both. Did that make any sense Doug? (laughs)

Bill: You do rare work for Warren, how does that differ from Marvel?

Doug: I don't do any work for Warren now. I did four years ago and they only got around to publishing it now. They still have maybe half dozen to a dozen of my stories that they have not printed.

Bill: Do they only pay upon publication?

Doug: Oh no. I was paid years and years ago. They have so many stories in so many different stages of completion. Lost here and there around the world with Spanish artists, American artists. They have an immense back log, I'm sure, and yet sometimes they may not have enough for the issue at hand. It sounds like a paradox, but they've purchased enough stuff although they may not be able to lay their hands on it at any given time. I haven't done anything for Warren in a long time, since I started at Marvel.

Don: About the same time, I guess we started at about the same time.

Doug: But I hung on at Warren longer than you did, you went to Mar-

vel before I did, because I was in Chicago. Until I went to Marvel I worked exclusively through the mails. I had no contact with the publisher or anything. I sent the stories....

Bill: How'd you land the job without actual contact?

Doug: I just sent the stories in and got paid paid for the first five I wrote on the same day. A check showed up from Warren Publishing- no note, no congratulations, no litle note saying,"Heh, we're taking your stories." 'Just a check with the stories listed. I said heh, this is easy, I think I'll keep doing it.

Bill: What were you doing before that? Did you always want to go into writing?

Doug: Probably subconciously. I had always read comics, I was an incredible comics freak. You can look back in some of the old issues, as you can with virtually all the writers, and find fan letters in the columns. I wrote a lot of them.

TWH '76

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